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Please note this letter was written and sent prior to WRA learning of the open records request made upon the Department of Health Services

July 1, 2020

TO: Governor Tony Evers
DHS Secretary-Designee Andrea Palm

FR: Kristine Hillmer, President and CEO
Susan Quam, Executive Vice President

RE: Releasing business names

The Wisconsin Restaurant Association (WRA) has learned from multiple sources that the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) will release the names of Wisconsin businesses who have had two or more employees test positive for Covid-19. We have heard the information is expected to be released on Friday.

WRA opposes releasing that data because people may wrongly assume, that the employees contracted COVID-19 at the workplace and that the public is actively at risk from catching the virus at these restaurants despite obvious cleaning and protective protocols. As a result, businesses already hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic could face brand and reputation damage potentially resulting in financial harm.

Governor Evers, you recently thanked our industry for all of the hard work it has done to comply with state and local orders and for enacting protocols to protect employees and customers as restaurants began opening up last month. Releasing this data in this manner will likely wipe out all of the hard work restaurants have done to ensure the public it can dine out safely. Any business on this list will be at risk for media and social media attacks they do not deserve.

We ask that you reconsider releasing this information. Contact tracing programs that are already in place at the state and local level are a better way to inform individuals that are truly exposed to Coronavirus.

We would be open to any conversations you or your team would like to have on this matter.